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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 006675

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA TRILATERAL MEETING TO IMPROVE SECURITY FOR
TURKISH TRUCKERS IN IRAQ

REF: STATE 195610

Classified By: DCM Robert Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Responding to a U.S. proposal (reftel) for Joint Iraq, Turkey, U.S. talks on trucker security, the Turkish government organized the first meeting in Ankara November 30. All three delegations agreed that the half-day meeting was successful in clarifying ongoing MNF-I security procedures and identifying a number of practical steps to improve security for Turkish truck drivers in Iraq. The most notable aspect of this meeting was what did not occur: none of the delegations strayed into tangential and controversial issues that have hindered cooperation in the past, such as fees charged by Kurdish authorities or the location of the second border crossing. There was strong media interest, which helped Turkish officials demonstrate that they are taking steps to protect Turkish truckers. All three countries sent sizable and well-prepared delegations to the talks. Most important, the Turks and Iraqis came prepared to reach agreement on practical steps forward. The results of the meeting will be summarized in a final report. The text of the draft report is included in para 8. A short press release was issued (para 9). End Summary.

2. (C) Turkish delegation head, MFA Deputy Under Secretary Osman Koruturk reported that 59 Turkish drivers have been killed in Iraq, a large number have been kidnapped (most have since been released), and 46 have been seriously wounded. He emphasized that as the numbers have increased there has been rising public -- and therefore -- political concern about the role of Turkish truckers in support of the coalition in Iraq. The government recognizes that coalition efforts to stabilize Iraq are in Turkey's best interest, and Turkish companies want to continue to truck supplies into Iraq. However, further deterioration of the security situation for Turkish truckers could result in an interruption of supplies, something the GOT wants to avoid. Koruturk said that it is the responsibility of the Iraqi government, with help from MNF-I, to provide security for the drivers.

3. (C) Akif Ayhan, MFA Office Director for Bilateral Economic Affairs, laid out some preliminary proposals from the Turkish side: more police checkpoints on the main truck routes in Iraq; facilities to provide safe parking and overnight accommodations for truckers; improved convoy escorts, including use of airborne support; including all trucks under convoy security schemes -- the Turks said that only 30 percent of trucks were protected by MNF-I escorts (Note: this represents 100 percent coverage for MNF-I convoys -- not all convoys are under MNF-I responsibility.); consider using different routes within Iraq; and help to identify and expedite the return to Turkey of drivers wounded or killed in Iraq. Ayhan added that a second border gate would offer more route alternatives. (Note: This was the only time that the controversial issue of the second border gate was mentioned.) A representative of the Turkish General Staff provided a briefing on the alternative routes from Turkey to Baghdad and the TGS assessment of security threats on each.

4. (C) The U.S. delegation was led by Ankara DCM Robert Deutsch, who acknowledged the important role of Turkish truckers in support of coalition troops and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. He noted that MNF-I provides security escorts only for trucks providing supplies for coalition troops or for coalition humanitarian assistance efforts. He added that the U.S. and MNF are committed to improving security procedures for truckers, but emphasized that trucker security will remain a problem until the overall security in Iraq improves, and that is why the recent engagement in Fallujah was so important. Colonel Virgil Williams, representing MNF-I, reported that security for those supporting the coalition was a high priority for MNF-I. Williams explained current MNF-I protection procedures for truck convoys. He said the coalition forces constantly assess the threat and measures to counter the threat; he added that the current convoy security system meets mission requirements. The minimum protection is one security platform for 10 trucks; it is the option of the commander on the ground to increase the number of escorts. Williams added that MNF-I does not provide airborne support for convoys, but air support can be utilized to respond to specific threats. In response to Turkish concerns that convoys were not protected on their return run to Turkey, Williams assured the

Turks that security is provided both ways. DCM Deutsch noted, however, that some truckers choose not to wait for the northbound convoy and strike out on their own. Koruturk said the Turks would inform their drivers that this would no longer be allowed.

15. (C) Iraqi delegation head, MFA Under Secretary Hamid al Bayati, also expressed his appreciation for the important role Turkish drivers play in support of coalition forces and Iraq's reconstruction. He pointed out that foreign terrorists have poured into Iraq, killing innocent civilians and creating security problems throughout Iraq. He made a point to emphasize that after the operation in Fallujah, which eliminated a safe haven for the terrorists, the security situation throughout Iraq has markedly improved. He expected the situation to improve even more after elections in January. Al Bayati said the goal of the Iraqi delegation was to decide today on practical steps to improve security for Turkish truckers and to cooperate on implementation of the agreed upon steps. He stated that security for Turkish citizens in Iraq is the responsibility of the sovereign Iraqi government, noting that the multi-national forces continue to make sacrifices to help Iraq fulfill that responsibility. He said that in the short-term, the Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministries would work together to identify the best routes for the truckers and prepare plans to protect the drivers. He said that Iraqi forces cannot provide protection for individual trucks -- they must be formed into convoys. He acknowledged the special problem of trucks that break down en route and promised to find a solution. In the long-term, he proposed that Turkey and Iraq cooperate to build a depot at the border, where supplies from Turkey could be off-loaded and transported into Iraq by Iraqi truckers. In this way, Turkish drivers would not need to travel on dangerous roads in Iraq. Al Bayati explained that foreigners draw special attention from the terrorists, who threaten them in order to put pressure on their governments not to cooperate with the coalition. He said the Oil Ministry had established a small depot near the border to off-load and store refined products from Turkey and planned to increase the capacity of that facility. The Transportation Ministry was taking stock of available trucks and drivers in Iraq to assess the feasibility of such a plan for other classes of goods. Additionally, Fakhri Rishan, Trade Ministry Senior Advisor, said the Iraqi side had already identified some locations for the rest/accommodations areas. He recommended that representatives from the Trade and Transportation Ministries form a working group to quickly agree on sites and begin construction.

16. (C) Koruturk responded that Turkey agreed to the sites proposed by the Iraqi side. However, he said the government could not agree to the proposal to establish a depot because this might affect transport agreements. (Akif Ayhan later explained to Econoff that the Turks feared that limiting the Turkish truckers to deliveries at the border might set a precedent for restricting Turkish trucks making deliveries in Iraq in the future.)

17. (C) During a side meeting of representatives from each delegation, a number of agreements were reached for inclusion in a final report. Iraq agreed to: 1) increase the number of police checkpoints; 2) provide security for Turkish trucks not already included in MNF-I convoys; 3) establish a working group to set up a joint venture to undertake construction of safe parking areas and accommodations for truckers -- Iraq's Interior and Defense Ministries agreed to provide security for these facilities; 4) establish temporary transfer points, where containers can be transferred from Turkish trucks to Iraqi trucks for onward delivery inside Iraq; and 5) establish a satellite-based communication network (GSM and GPS) to monitor and communicate with truckers while in Iraq. Koruturk said Turkey would pay for the system. Turkey and Iraq agreed on the need to urge Syria not to interrupt trucks and trains transiting Syria. Koruturk suggested that this could be done by each country on a bilateral basis. (Note: Neither Iraq nor Turkey sought U.S. involvement in this dialogue.) No agreement was reached on a Turkish suggestion to establish a hotline between Turkish commanders in southeast Turkey and U.S. and Iraqi commanders in northern Iraq. The sides agreed to pursue technical meetings on the specific Iraqi-Turkish agreements, most likely in Baghdad. They agreed that there would be a follow up trilateral, but the place and time were not settled.

18. (C) Text of Draft Meeting Report. (Note: Some of the following points will be modified in the final paper to reflect subsequent agreements.)

MNF (USA)
As a Request

Reinforcement of the existing measures:

- Military escort.
- Airborne support.
- More accompanying vehicles.
- More troops.

- Lowest number of Turkish trucks in a single convoy.
- Smaller but more effective units/teams.
- Extending the route segments and increasing the checkpoints under protection.

Bilateral (Iraq)

- Increasing police checkpoints (as many as possible).
- If possible, coverage by Iraqi national escort for convoys.
- Safe parking and accommodation facilities (to be identified). (There is already a joint venture initiative between the Iraqi Land Transportation Company and a Turkish firm; protection for such areas will be provided by the Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministries, but construction work will be carried out by the Iraqi Ministry of Transportation in cooperation with their Turkish counterparts.)
- Temporary shifting locations: exchanging containers with Iraqi vehicles/drivers. (To be further discussed.)
- Establishing a network of communications by satellite for monitoring of trucks.
- Tripartite consultation between Turkey, Iraq and Syria for trucking and railway transportation.
- Follow-up meetings of the Forum (Ankara/Habur etc.)
- Setting a time schedule for the implementation of the measures agreed.
- Exchanging of information through a hotline (liaison officers from the military).
- Habur truck monitoring system with counterpart at Mosul.

19. (U) Text of Press Release:

The convening of the tripartite meeting of Turkey, Iraq and the United States, the latter representing the Multi National Force in Iraq, was decided following the increase in the security risks in Iraq which has also resulted in the killing of a growing number of Turkish truck drivers.

The first Trilateral Transport Security Forum was held in Ankara on 30 November 2004 with the participation of high-level civilian and military authorities from Turkey, Iraq and the United States.

During the meeting, particular focus was given to the security difficulties in Iraq and concrete ways to overcome them. These deliberations have produced a set of additional measures that will be effectively implemented. The Iraqi side, together with the authorities of the Multi National Force, will work to put these measures into practice.

The meeting also took note of the efforts that improve the overall security situation in Iraq.

At the end of the meeting, the parties also decided to establish a follow-up mechanism with a view to monitor the state of implementation of the elements of agreement and to make these measures when needed, in the process of their implementation.

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